



## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

June 6, 2002

### **H.R. 1209** **Child Status Protection Act**

*As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on May 16, 2002*

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1209 would result in no significant costs to the federal government. The act would affect direct spending and receipts, so pay-as-you-go procedures would apply, but we estimate that any such effects would be less than \$500,000 annually. H.R. 1209 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Under current law, unmarried children of United States citizens, lawful permanent residents, and refugees and asylees are eligible for permanent U.S. residence and certain other immigration benefits if they are under the age of 21. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) determines a child's age at the time the agency reviews the application. Because of backlogs at INS, many applications reviewed each year are for persons who have turned 21 since their petitions were filed, which makes them ineligible under the original petition.

H.R. 1209 would direct the INS—in most cases—to use the child's age when the petition was originally filed. The act's provisions would apply to petitions filed both before and after enactment. CBO expects that this legislation would increase the number of immigrant visas and refugee and asylee claims granted each year to children. Based on information from the Department of State, we expect that the bill's provisions would affect roughly 1,000 children each year.

The INS collects administrative fees when applications are filed, so H.R. 1209 would not affect the amount collected by that agency. In addition, the Department of State collects fees for issuing immigrant visas. These fees are deposited in the Treasury and classified as governmental receipts (i.e., revenues). Because H.R. 1209 would increase the number of immigrant visas granted each year, revenues from this visa fee would increase. However, we expect that the additional revenues would total less than \$500,000 in any year.

Finally, enacting this legislation could increase direct spending for certain federal benefit programs, but any increase in spending for those programs would likely be less than \$500,000 annually because of the small number of persons affected.

On April 16, 2001, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 1209, the Child Status Protection Act of 2001, as ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on April 4, 2001. That version of the legislation applied only to children of United States citizens applying for permanent U.S. residence. CBO estimated that implementing the House version of the bill also would result in no significant costs to the federal government.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Mark Grabowicz (for INS costs) and Sunita D'Monte (for State Department costs). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.